

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 179448 TOSEC 080160

64

ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MHMAUGHAN/ARDA:LAB

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON, JR.

PM/MC:BFEMMINELLA (SUBS)

S/S-O: P. JOHNSON

PM/SAS - SWINSHIP (DRAFT)

NEA/RA:RHOBBS (DRAFT)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 179448 TOSEC 080160

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ESTC, BEXP, BTIO, PFOR, SY, US

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SALE OF BOEING CHINOOK HELICOPTERS TO
SYRIA

REF.: DAMASCUS 2785

FOR SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

1. GIVEN SENSITIVITY OF ARMS SUPPLY ISSUE AT THIS POINT,
COUPLED WITH IMPORTANCE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH SYRIA IN
PEACE NEGOTIATION CONTEXT, PLEASE CHECK FOLLOWING MESSAGE
WITH SECRETARY BEFORE WE SEND IT TO DAMASCUS. WE ARE
REPEATING TWO RELEVANT DAMASCUS TELEGRAMS. (QUESTION MAY
ARISE RE DAMASCUS 2821, WHETHER WE HAVE IN FACT APPROVED
GUN MOUNTS FOR SYRIAN NAVAL VESSELS; DEPT. (MC) HAS NO
RECORD OF APPLICATION HAVING BEEN MADE FOR AN ADVISORY
OPINION ON THIS EQUIPMENT. ONLY CONTACT TO DATE BETWEEN
COMPANY AND DEPARTMENT ON THIS ISSUE WAS MAY 16 TELEPHONED
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PAGE 02 STATE 179448 TOSEC 080160

REQUEST FROM COMPANY FOR INFORMAL, ON-THE-SPOT OPINION BY
MC RE PROSPECTS FOR DEPARTMENT APPROVAL OF SUCH A SALE.
COMPANY WAS GIVEN VAGUE "MAYBE" AS REPLY AND TOLD IT SHOULD
REQUEST AN ADVISORY OPINION IF IT WANTED A MORE DEFINITE

ANSWER. COMPANY HAS MADE NO FURTHER CONTACT WITH DEPARTMENT ON MATTER.)

2. BEGIN TEXT:

BOEING REPS CALLED ON NEA/ARN JULY 24 FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED SALE OF CHINOOKS TO SYRIAN AIR FORCE. (THEY HAVE ALSO APPLIED FOR ADVISORY OPINION FROM MUNITIONS CONTROL.) WE DISCOURAGED THEM FROM PROCEEDING FURTHER WITH SALE. THEY SAID THAT, DESPITE APPARENT INFEASIBILITY OF CONCLUDING SALE AT THIS POINT, THEY WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO KEEP SYRIAN INTEREST ALIVE. THEY WERE CONSIDERING SUGGESTING THAT SARG APPROACH USG DIRECTLY ABOUT IT.

2. FYI. WE SEE NO POSSIBILITY OF THIS SALE BEING APPROVED. WE AGREE WITH YOU THAT, IN LIGHT OF THIS, IT MIGHT PREVENT SOME WEAR AND TEAR ON U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONS IF PROJECT COULD BE TURNED OFF BEFORE SYRIAN EXPECTATIONS AROUSED ANY FURTHER. IF BOEING PEOPLE FOLLOW TACK WITH SYRIANS THEY DESCRIBED TO US WE MAY SEE DEVELOP THE SITUATION WE PARTICULARLY WANT TO AVOID. SUGGEST YOU TELL BOEING OFFICIALS THERE OF NEGATIVE REACTION HERE TO SALE (THEY WILL PRESUMABLY HAVE REPORT FROM THEIR OWN REPS AS WELL) AND URGE THEM TO DROP THE PROJECT. IT IS NON-STARTER FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WHILE IT BEST TO LEAVE THIS MAINLY BETWEEN BOEING AND SYRIANS, THERE WOULD BE ADVANTAGES TO ENSURING THAT SYRIANS HAVE STATEMENT OF OUR POSITION DIRECTLY FROM U.S., PARTICULARLY GIVEN OTHER REQUESTS THAT SEEM TO BE IN THE WINGS (DAMASCUS 2821). THEREFORE, UNLESS IN YOUR JUDGMENT YOU BELIEVE IT WOULD CREATE EVEN GREATER PROBLEM IN U.S.-SARG RELATIONS TO DO SO YOU SHOULD SEEK OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE SYRIANS UNDERSTAND THEY SHOULD NOT EXPECT SALE TO GO THROUGH. THIS WILL OBVIOUSLY NEED TO BE HANDLED DELICATELY. PRINCIPAL POINT YOU WILL WANT TO GET ACROSS IS THAT, WITH INCREASING PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL CRITICISM
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 179448 TOSEC 080160

OF U.S. SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, EVEN TO COUNTRIES WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY SUPPLIED (E.G. IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA), FOR US TO COMMENCE SELLING MAJOR ITEMS TO ANOTHER COUNTRY IN MIDDLE EAST AT THIS TIME WOULD RUN INTO STIFF OPPOSITION AT HOME AND UNDERMINE BROAD BASE OF DOMESTIC SUPPORT WE MUST HAVE TO PURSUE EFFECTIVELY OUR MIDDLE EAST PECEMAKING EFFORTS. THIS IS AN OVERRIDING PRIORITY OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND WE MUST AVOID ANYTHING THAT COULD JEOPARDIZE OUR ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO WORK FOR ITS SUCCESS. END TEXT. INGERSOLL

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